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SUBJECT: CONGO / TANZANIA / UNHCR AGREEMENT ON REFUGEE
REPATRIATIONS

1. SUMMARY: The DRC, Tanzania and UNHCR signed an agreement January 20 on repatriation of Congolese refugees currently in Tanzania. According to a UNHCR official, however, actual repatriation will probably not begin before 2006, due to inhospitable conditions in the Congo. END SUMMARY.

An Agreement...

2. Representatives from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Tanzania, and the U.N. High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) signed a tripartite agreement in Dar es Salaam on January 20, providing for the repatriation of Congolese refugees currently in Tanzania. Congolese Interior Minister Theophile Mbemba signed the agreement on behalf of the DRC. The deal paves the way for the repatriation of some 400,000 Congolese refugees, 150,000 of whom live in Tanzania.

...But No Action Yet

3. Although the agreement is an important legal and diplomatic step forward, actual repatriation will likely not begin before 2006. During the week of January 17-21, the UNHCR and other U.N. agencies visited southeastern Congo, to evaluate reception conditions in areas where refugees have returned. According to a Kinshasa-based UNHCR official, "UNHCR will use 2005 to prepare for the return of refugees and repatriation will commence in 2006."

4. (U) Bujumbura minimize considered.

MEECE